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Migration effects on pollutants in eggs of Arctic-breeding geese

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Arctic breeding barnacle geese (*Branta leucopsis*) are a herbivorous species that migrate from the United Kingdom to the Arctic every summer to breed. Females utilise resources towards reproduction along the flyway, including distant resources (United Kingdom and Northern Norway) and local resources (Svalbard) relative to the breeding grounds. Depending on migration route, allocation of resources towards egg production may differ within a breeding goose population. Thus different energy sources may also affect how pollutants are taken up and deposited to eggs, including those which are both protein and lipid soluble. In order to examine the effect of migration on pollutants in eggs, a field study was carried out during the breeding season of 2016. Eggs (N = 60) were collected at an island breeding colony in Svalbard and several hundred grams of vegetation (N = 15 sample collections) was collected at different sites along the goose's flyway. Resightings of ringed geese also took place in Northern Norway. Egg and vegetation samples were analysed for stable isotope of carbon ($\delta^{13}\text{C}$) and nitrogen ($\delta^{15}\text{N}$), as well as pollutants including protein-associated poly- and perfluoroalkyl substances, mercury (PFASs and Hg), lipid soluble polychlorinated biphenyls, and hexachlorobenzene (PCBs and HCB). Stable isotope ratios in eggs could not be precisely attributed to either local or distant resources due to overlapping signal, but stable isotopes of nitrogen appeared to be fuelled by distant resources in United Kingdom and Northern Norway. When examining pollutants individually, there was no relationship found between stable isotopes and pollutant concentrations. However, when combining pollutants together as part of a multivariate analysis, it was found that resighting data contributed to the variation in PFAS levels and patterns across eggs, but not for PCBs. Protein associated pollutants (PFASs and Hg) may be more influenced by migration strategy than lipid soluble contaminants (PCBs and HCB), due to protein stores being a more limiting energy source during migration than lipids. This knowledge furthers our understanding on how pollutants operate within Arctic terrestrial ecosystems, and the interaction between climate and pollutant bioaccumulation in highly seasonal environments.

Keywords: migration, geese, isotopes, Arctic

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